

Outreach Insider



News, ideas, and information
on NRCS Outreach initiatives
and projects in Illinois

USDA

Natural Resources Conservation Service

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Outreach Message:



Bill Gradle
State Conservationist

Greetings!
Hopefully, the last freeze has reared its head and we can begin the busy and gratifying season all conservationists live for-Spring!

As you dive into your "To Do" lists and look for ways to incorporate outreach, don't forget to look for the obvious

clients. There are so many non-traditional and innovative initiatives going on here in Illinois-just read this issue of the newsletter! But don't forget to serve and make available even our most simple and basic conservation assistance to the small farmer.

Their needs may be different; the scope and scale of their problems and solutions may be small, but they are just as important as the big farmer, maybe even moreso. Your creativity and innovation in addressing their specific needs can be applied to their circumstances. Sometimes, our knowledge, our networks and contacts in agriculture and in our own communities can provide a broader vision to a situation that requires just that. Often, an idea or suggestion or an awareness you bring to a small farmer can be the gentle "nudge" that sends them into a new and profitable direction and a brighter future.

Also, be sure that you capture all your outreach projects and clients in PRMS. Whether you enter it as a success story write-up or simply by profiling the client in the "customers assisted" category, please take the time to enter it. We are becoming more and more accountable as an agency, as a profession. The stability of our budget is becoming more and more dependent on reports like PRMS. I know it feels like we're asking you to be "bean counters." Try and think of it as a way to take credit for all the conservation strides you make. That's how I like to look at it. You're doing incredible work out there. Let's tell Congress just what you're doing so they'll keep giving us money to continue the job. Let's tell the world.

Willie J. Gradle
Illinois State Conservationist

What is Outreach?

Outreach is a way of conducting business that ensures underserved individuals and groups throughout the United States and its territories are made aware of, understand, and have a working knowledge of USDA programs and services. Outreach will ensure that these programs and services are equitable and made accessible to all.



*What's Happening
in Illinois—*

Vegetable Project Growing

Roscoe Allen, Outreach Team Leader, is working with a group of Pulaski County producers to assist them with a developing a fresh vegetable enterprise. The producers came to NRCS for assistance when they decided to collectively produce and market fresh vegetables in southern Illinois.

The collective effort started in the spring of 1999, when the group banded together to produce "niche market" products that were sold through established markets in southern Illinois. The group has since joined with a similar group of producers from SE Missouri in a joint production and marketing effort. The larger group plans to capitalize on production by purchasing supplies in bulk quantity, sharing equipment, and collectively marketing niche products to large retail outlets.



Boxes of Collard greens (Southern IL)



Producers harvesting Turnip greens
(Southern IL)

Dr. Emil Jason, Project Coordinator, GRAND, has been working with the group to assist them with the coordination of the bi-state effort. Dr. Jason has had several meetings with producers over the past seven months, providing them training, developing planting schedules, and refining the intricate details of the overall operation.

Mike Doherty, Cooperative Specialist, RD has also contributed to the project by providing business planning and related information. RD has expressed interest in helping the producers acquire needed equipment for the project.

The group was able to obtain some equipment for the project through a grant last year. Their goal now is to work to establish a sustainable and thriving business. Future plans include the construction of a sorting shed, installation of an irrigation system, and the purchase of additional processing equipment to provide more value-added products.



Producers sorting Mustard greens (Southern IL)



What's Happening in Illinois—

(Continued)

Andover Lake Erosion Project a Success

The Village of Andover, Illinois, has a small lake that has become a well-known landmark for the community. A silt retention dam at the upper end of the lake had experienced much erosion in recent years due to the poor quality fill material used in the construction, coupled with wave action along the shoreline. A sidewalk on top of the dam, which connects one side of the lake to the other, and provides access for residents



Andover, IL – Rock rip-rap installed to stabilize sections of the lakes' dam.



Andover, IL – Dam at initial construction.

and visitors alike for recreational activities had become a danger. The sidewalk had started to break apart because of the deteriorating condition of the dam and the erosion caused by wave action. As a result, community residents expressed safety concerns, especially for handicap visitors and small children who use the lake.

The Mayor of Andover requested Interstate RC&D's assistance with developing alternatives to solve the problem. Interstate RC&D worked closely with the Jim Jenson, Engineer, FOD # 4, to develop a solution for the problem. After an alternative was accepted by Andover, Interstate RC&D secured a Community Outreach Grant from NRCS and partnered with the Village to complete the dam rehabilitation project. This outreach project directly benefited the community of Andover and the thousands of visitors who use the lake each year.

Southwest RC&D Receives Donation for Brooklyn Project

The Southwest Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) received a donation of \$15,000 from the Boeing Employee Community Fund for a tree beautification plan in Brooklyn, Illinois. Ed Weilbacher, Coordinator, Southwest RC&D, took part in a check presentation ceremony attended by Ruby Cook, Mayor of Brooklyn, and Ron Reece and Tom Jones, Boeing Employee Community Fund board members. The ceremony, which was held at Brooklyn's Lovejoy High School, was part of the second annual Brooklyn Heritage Week program.

Since receiving the funds, Ed Weilbacher has coordinated the implementation of the tree beautification plan with a group of volunteers. This past fall, several three-inch trees were purchased and planted in designated locations throughout the town. The final components of phase I will be completed this spring with the planting of scrubs and bulbs around City Hall and a senior citizen center.

Ed Weilbacher recently met with the work-group to prepare another proposal for funding phase II of the beautification plan.



Planting shrubs near Brooklyn's City Hall.

Left: Ed Weilbacher, volunteers Kieron Beckett and Mr. Ivory Scott.

Right: Mayor Ruby Cook, Darrell Thomson and Catherine Beckett

Backyard Conservation Exhibited

NRCS, Rock Island SWCD, and Interstate RC&D staffs, directors, and council members recently cooperated in hosting an exhibit at the Bald Eagle Days Environmental Show in Rock Island, IL. The annual event is designed to bring awareness to the return of Bald eagles to the area. With the banning of DDT and improved habitat, the eagle population has made a noticeable increase in the area.

The exhibit featured the national NRCS Backyard Conservation nomadic display as well as a landscaped water garden.



Rock Island - Shrub and plant display at Bald Eagle Days.

Representatives from the three organizations continuously staffed the exhibit during the 2-day event, discussing the Backyard Conservation program and providing information on establishing conservation practices on small properties. More than 21,000 people attended the show this year. Most visitors were from urban communities and were interested in environmental issues.

Native Plants Project Taking Shape

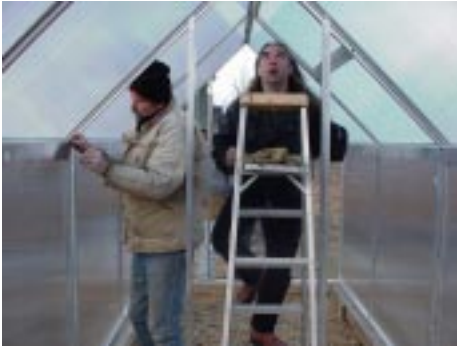
Midwest SOARRING's (Save Our Ancestor Remains and Resources) dream has come a little closer to reality with the recent completion of the second and final portable greenhouse. The effort, coordinated by Ivan Dozier, DC, Carlinville, is designed to assist Midwest SOARRING with their goal of repopulating the Illinois landscape with sacred herbs and other native plants that have cultural significance.

The first greenhouse (8' X 16') was erected in Macoupin County this past fall with the assistance of the NRCS/SWCD staffs, and volunteers. The base of the greenhouse consists of 4' x 4' treated timbers, set on a 6" gravel footing. They also sunk concrete pilings and really built a super foundation. The sidewalls are constructed of lightweight 4' x 4' corrugated



Bill Buchholtz, volunteer, completing initial slide panel installation of greenhouse in Westchester, IL (near Wolf Road Prairie)

Native Plants Project Taking Shape (Continued)



Gregg Kamen, & Bill Buchholtz volunteers, installing internal support rods. (Wolf Road Prairie)

sheets of polycarbonate, which is attached to internal aluminum railing for structural support. The roof has two 2' x 4' vent panels, which are automatically controlled, for heat exhaust. Initially, natural light will be used for the purpose of photosynthesis. Heating needs will be fulfilled with the use of a small portable kerosene heater, and potentially black plastic barrels filled with water, as well as other experimental means.

The second greenhouse is located at the Wolf Road Prairie on Constitution Street, just north of 31st street and Wolf Road (Westchester, IL). That greenhouse was erected by Joe "Standing Bear" Schranz and a number of SOARRING volunteers with Dozier's supervision. The Wolf Road Prairie has a large diversity of plants—between 300 to 400 varieties. The 80-acre prairie area also contains a wetland and supports many different types of birds, small animals, as well as deer.

With the spring season just a few short weeks away, Midwest SOARRING is planning, and anxiously awaiting their first planting season. Presently, the group has decided to experiment with three plant species this spring; Sweetgrass, Native Tobacco, and Sage.

For more information contact:
Ivan Dozier or Dan McCandless at
(217)854.2626 ext. 3



Completed greenhouse (Macoupin Co.)



Outreach Reporting

Gallatin County SWCD Honors Veterans

The Gallatin County SWCD is enjoying their outreach initiative. Each year, for the past four years, Gallatin County, along with Ridgway Woman's Club, and Skaggs Reeder Drugs, have put together treat bags filled with various items; conservation reading material, paperback books, toothpaste, socks, pens, paper, and toothbrushes. These items, along with candy and fruit, were delivered to more than sixty patients at the Veterans Rehabilitation Center in Marion, IL. Kristi Abell, Phyllis Mace, and Norbert Rider, an SWCD board director who plays Santa Claus, visited with each patient at the center. The veterans look forward to the event each year.



1st row L-R, Butch Rider, "Popcorn," & Phyllis Mace, 2nd row – Kristi Abell & Jan Roe

Hunting Made More Accessible

The Jefferson County NRCS staff has been assisting a client with the development of a hunting area that will cater to hunters with disabilities. The landowner, who is partially disabled himself, takes the clients to an accessible site on the farm. Each site is specially equipped with a radio so clients can easily contact the owner if assistance is needed. Blinds are specially designed for disabled clients. The local staff is assisting with technical and financial assistance. The site was recently featured in BuckMasters Magazine for their efforts to assist the hunters.

Drainage Improvements Completed in Pulaski

The Village of Pulaski, which is a small community of approximately 500 people in Pulaski County, recently completed a drainage project that is designed to eliminate flooding in the northeast proportion of the town. The Village had experienced nuisance flooding in parts of the community for several years, caused by a combination local runoff and nearby

Briar Creek. Prior to completion of the drainage project, flooding affected at least twenty homes even after minor storm events.

A resident of the community became aware of the services that the SCWD/NRCS provide, and contacted the field office about the problem in the spring of 1998. Shortly after the Village made their problem known, the Council drafted a resolution requesting technical assistance. After assessing the concerns, a committee was assembled and a comprehensive resource plan was developed through a series of group meetings with representatives from the community. The comprehensive plan identified over 8,000 feet of drainage ditches that needed dredging along the right-of-ways, as well as the replacement of 18 culverts for driveway access.

The Village had managed to raise some funds for the project, but with a very limited budget the village again came to NRCS for help locating sufficient funding to complete the project. The local staff assisted the committee with preparing a grant proposal and submitted the proposal through NRCS channels for funding. Fortunately, the proposal was accepted by NRCS and funded.

After locating sufficient funding, Dave Weber, FOD Engineer, completed a detail survey of the area and provided design alternatives. While continuing to work with the planning committee, the project was successfully completed this winter.

Marshal-Putnam Host Lady Landowner Meeting

The Marshal-Putnam SWCD hosted their first annual Lady Landowners meeting recently at the fellowship Hall of the Henry United Methodist church. Thirty-five women were in attendance, and enjoyed coffee and tasty sweets made of herbs. The treats were prepared by Shirley McKee, Director, Marshal-Putnam SWCD. Shirley gave a very interesting presentation on various methods of growing herbs and their use.

The interesting and informative program also included the following: Jan Stevens, Resource Conservationist, Stark County SWCD giving a presentation on Butterfly Gardens and Using Prairie Plants in the Landscape. Jan had a picture display of beautiful prairie flowers (forbs). "How your SWCD/NRCS Can Be of Service To You" was presented by Jill Ketter, Administrative Coordinator, Marshal-Putnam SWCD. Jill showed slides with her presentation. Dorothy Wilson talked about James Hall Woods, a woodland managed by the District, and the newly formed organization, Marshal-Putnam County Natural Area Guardians. Gene Vaughn, owner of Farm Care

Management & Appraisal, Elmwood, talked on "Working with Your Tenant and Farm Leases." Randy Edwards, District Conservationist, NRCS talked on federal and state programs. Rob Grant, CED, FSA, and Mona Liable, Chief Program Technician, M-P County FSA, talked on Loan Deficiency Payments (LDP) and the CRP program. Kim St John, Coordinator of Prairie Rivers RC&D presented "What is a Resource Conservation & Development Office?" Closing the program was a presentation on the "Community Response and Awareness Task Force," which is a new program developed by Extension Service and community leaders dealing with farm and family stress.

The meeting was adjourned with the drawing of door prizes. Each participant was also presented with an informational packet and was able to review a display and materials table. Dorothy Wilson, Associate Director, M-P SWCD, planned the event. The event was most successful and the District wishes to thank the M-P River Conservancy for helping the District in sponsoring this program.

Early Morning Meetings Going Well

Randy Edwards, D.C., Henry and Tom Miller, R.C., Marshall-Putnam SWCD, met with producers this fall at coffee shops throughout Marshall and Putnam Counties to bring conservation information to them. Informal coffee chats were held at 6:00a.m. with coffee and donuts provided by the Marshall-Putnam SWCD. Randy & Tom visited with the producers and answered questions regarding CREP, CRP, permits, filter strips, hunting regulations, prairie plants, forestry questions, T By 2000, and cost-share programs.

Producers enjoyed having the staff there to visit with them on their own time. Talking with producers one-on-one allowed them to open up about conservation concerns, and helped everyone to know each other better. The program will continue this spring at other locations. Two hours of meeting with producers provided success beyond measure and the staff is looking forward to continuing this program in 2000!

Fish Co-op Hoping to Provide Opportunities for Producers

With the recent approval of legislation that will provide \$12 million over the next ten years for the development of a fish industry, a number of producers throughout Illinois are weighing their options. Several producers, particularly in southern Illinois, have requested meetings with NRCS, FSA,

and the Illinois Fish Co-op in an effort to obtain more information about the new initiative.

Steve Killian, Director, Illinois Fish Co-op, is working with potential producers throughout the state to educate them on the opportunities that are available in Illinois. The co-op, which will be based in Pinckneyville, Illinois, will assist producers with all facets of the fish industry including production, promotion, and marketing. The co-op will also construct a processing facility to package fish for distribution throughout the country.

Statistics show that Illinoisans consume more than 170 million pounds of seafood annually, which makes Illinois the largest inland seafood market in the United States. However, less than one percent of fish/seafood is harvest is harvested from Illinois waters.

There are currently 80 individuals in Illinois licensed to farm fish. Only nine permit holders derive 50% or more of their family income from fish farming. Most aquaculture permit holders raise fish as a hobby or as a small income supplement. The overall value of Illinois' aquaculture industry is estimated to be \$2 - \$3 million annually. The majority of the fish being farmed are for bait or stocking purposes; farming fish for human consumption is very limited. Clearly the potential of Illinois aquaculture is not being realized.

For more information on the Illinois aquaculture initiative contact:

Steve Killian
Illinois Fish Co-op
P. O. Box 235, Pinckneyville, IL 62274
(618) 357-FISH (3474)
Email: skillian@midwest.net

Reading Recommendations

- Citizens who are taking on new leadership roles in their communities may be interested in: "Finding Your Voice: Learning to Lead Anywhere You Want to Make a Difference," by Lorraine R. Matusak. The book focuses on how "ordinary citizens" can learn leadership skills. This paperback is \$17.95 from Jossey-Bass publishers at 1-800-956-7739. **One copy is available for loan,** contact John Glover.

- Need help with grant writing? Another book from Jossey-Bass details how to create successful grant proposals. "Winning Grants Step by Step: Support Centers of America's Complete Workbook for Planning, Developing, and Writing Successful Proposals," by Mim Carlson can help groups transform ideas into funded projects. Call 1-800-956-7739 for this \$25.95 paperback.

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Who Do I Call With Outreach Questions?

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Steve Mozley
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217-492-5045

Tessa Chadwick
Asst. State Conservationist (FOD 3)
815-937-3233 x114

Bob Dean
Asst. State Conservationist (FOD 4)
309-342-5138 x115

Lue Walters
Asst. State Conservationist
(Community Assistance)
309-452-0830 x111

Jody Rendziak
Community Planner & Sociologist
217-353-6632

Internet Connections

Outreach Website

An Illinois outreach website has been established to provide resource information. The site provides general outreach information on developing an outreach strategy and it has links to other agencies, possible funding sources, and other valuable information. The Illinois NRCS outreach website can be accessed at:

www.il.nrcs.usda.gov/outreach/Outreach.html

Grant Info On-Line

"Grant News," a grant listing newsletter produced by the Illinois State University Applied Social Research Unit is now available on-line. The newsletter lists grant opportunities available from various private and public sources. "Grant News" can be accessed at:

www.socialresearch.ilstu.edu/asru/publications.htm

If you have an outreach related article, story idea, or success story to share, please send it to:

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